

Dousman Hotel
Water Street at Fisher Street
St. Feriole Island
Prairie du Chien, Wisconsin

HABS No. WI-291

HABS
WIS,
12. PRACH,
4-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Rocky Mountain Regional Office
Department of the Interior
P.O. Box 25287
Denver, Colorado 80225

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DOUSMAN HOTEL

Location: Water Street at Fisher Street.
Accessor's Block 24, Lots 1, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11
12, 13, and 14, also part of Lots 2, 3, and 4,
Prairie du Chien, Crawford County, Wisconsin.

UTM: 15.649940 / 4768125

Quad: Prairie du Chien

Present Owner: Prairie Petroleum Products, Inc.
Prairie du Chien, Wisconsin

Present Occupant: Vacant

Present Use: Vacant

Statement of Significance: The Dousman Hotel, built 1864-65, is associated with Prairie du Chien's role in post-Civil War transportation on the upper Mississippi. When its builder, The Milwaukee & Mississippi Railroad, extended a line to Prairie du Chien's "Lower Town" in 1857, it marked the beginning of a prosperous relationship with steamboat, barge and packet companies that plied the river from St. Louis to St. Paul. In the mid-1860's, the railroad and river lines effected a major relocation of their activities north to Prairie du Chien's St. Feriolo Island; the program included not only construction of railroads, shipping facilities, a warehouse and a grain elevator, but also construction of the Dousman Hotel.

The hotel was strategically located on tracts near the steamboat landings, in order to serve both rail and river passengers. By including a depot, waiting room and ticket office on the hotel's first floor,

Statement of
Significance:
(continued)

the Milwaukee & Mississippi Railroad ensured itself a steady clientele of travelers, as persons entering to make travel arrangements were thereby encouraged to patronize the establishment's well-appointed dining and sleeping accommodations. Not least among the Dousman's patrons were emigrants on their way to seek land in the trans-Mississippi West, principally Northern Iowa and Minnesota. They appear to have come to Prairie du Chien in such numbers that an "emigrant depot," still extant, was built nearby to augment the hotel's own waiting rooms. With the extension of rail lines north from Prairie du Chien and other river communities in the mid-1880's, the town's importance as a transshipment point declined. The Dousman Hotel, however, remained a popular establishment until after the turn of the century. Today it shares St. Feriote Island with other structural artifacts of Prairie du Chien's history, among them an American Fur Company warehouse and the Italianate-style mansion built for Jane Dousman, widow of Hercules Dousman.

The Dousman Hotel in its heyday exemplified the kind of establishments frequently built by railroads or private individuals to accommodate rail passengers in the late nineteenth century. These hotel/eating houses were commonly located near rail platforms or depots, and at transportation transfer points, as was the case in Prairie du Chien. The Dousman was of particular interest because it originally included depot and waiting room facilities, as well as sleeping and dining accommodations. However, substantial changes to the structure during this century have eliminated most of the features which embodied these functions.

DOUSMAN HOTEL

I. Historical Information

A. Physical History

1. Date of Erection: 1864-85
2. Architect: unknown
3. Original and subsequent owners:

The following is an incomplete chain of title to the property on which the Dousman Hotel is located: Lots 1, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, and 14, also part of Lots 2, 3, and 4, in Block 24, according to the plat of the subdivision of original main village lots of the private land claims at Prairie du Chien. Reference is to the Recorder of Deeds, Crawford County, Prairie du Chien, Wisconsin.

- 1864 Warranty Deed, dated 27 April 1864, recorded 28 April 1864, in Volume 17 of Deeds, page 528.
-Lawrence F. Case and Emily F. Case to Milwaukee and Prairie du Chien Railway Company (Lots 2 and 7).
- 1864 Warranty Deed, dated 27 April 1864, recorded 27 April 1864, in Volume 17 of Deeds, page 527.
-Frederick J. Miller to Milwaukee and Prairie du Chien Railway Company (Lots 1 and 8).
- 1864 Warranty Deed, dated 27 April 1864, recorded 27 April 1864, in Volume 17 of Deeds, page 326.
-Thomas A. Savage and Elvira A. Savage to the Milwaukee and Prairie du Chien Railway Company (west 1/2 of Main Village Lot No. 17, containing 13 lots in Blocks 22, 23, 24).
- 1926 Bill of Sale, dated 31 December 1926, recorded 3 May 1937, in Volume L of Miscellaneous, page 516.
-Receivers of the Chicago, Milwaukee, St. Paul & Pacific Railroad Company to Estate of Joseph H. Zimmerman.
- 1928 Indenture, dated 20 January 1928, recorded in Volume L of Miscellaneous, page 518.

-E. C. Amman (Executor, Estate of Joseph H. Zimmerman) to L. Cornelius.

- 1928 Indenture, dated 1 March 1928, recorded in Volume L of Miscellaneous, page 519.
-L. Cornelius to Wanamingo Ferry Company.
- 1937 Indenture, dated 3 May 1937, recorded in Volume L of Miscellaneous, page 520.
-Wanamingo Ferry Company to William D. Carroll.
- 1937 Court Order, dated 5 March 1937, recorded 3 May 1937, in Volume L of Miscellaneous, page 515.
-Chicago, Milwaukee, St. Paul & Pacific Railroad Company to William D. Carroll.
- 1937 Deed, dated 8 April 1937, recorded 3 May 1937, in Volume 148 of Deeds, page 539.
-Trustees of the Chicago, Milwaukee, St. Paul & Pacific Railroad Company to William D. Carroll.
- 1938 Warranty Deed, dated 19 February 1938, recorded 21 February 1938, in Volume 143 of Deeds, page 468.
-William D. Carroll and wife to Carroll Packing Company.
- 1946 Warranty Deed, dated 1 July 1946, recorded 5 July 1946, in Volume 167 of Deeds, page 43.
-Carroll Packing Company to Oscar Mayer & Company.
- 1955 Warranty Deed, dated 21 July 1955, recorded 27 July 1955, in Volume 167 of Deeds, page 139.
-Oscar Mayer & Company to Wisconsin Farmco Service Cooperative.
- 1961 Warranty Deed, dated 21 January 1961, recorded 16 May 1961, in Volume 167 of Deeds, page 203.
-Wisconsin Farmco Service Cooperative to Speaker Products Corporation.
- 1969 Warranty Deed, dated 26 July 1969, recorded 28 July 1969, in Volume 251 of Deeds, page 289.
-Speaker Products Corporation to First State Savings Bank, McGregor, Iowa.

1972 Warranty Deed, dated 2 August 1972, recorded 7 August 1972,
in Volume 272 of Deeds, page 264.
-First State Savings Bank to Prairie Petroleum Products,
Inc.

4. Builder, contractor, supplier: unknown

5. Original Plans and Construction:

See Section II (Architectural Information) below. Section II focuses on the physical characteristics of the Dousman Hotel before it was remodeled as a meat packing plant in the late 1930s. Information for Section II has been drawn primarily from field investigation and historical photographs (see Section III.B), as well as other documentary evidence.

6. Alterations and Additions:

(Date unknown, but probably between c. 1924 and 1940): A one-story addition was made at the south end of the main block. It utilized yellow brick similar to that of the original structure, but the mortar joints are less finely pointed. The main (west) facade features five tall, round-arched openings with corbeled voussoirs, similar to those of the hotel's frontispiece. At the south end was a tall brick chimney, with two round-arched windows to the right. The remains of a brick interior wall, plus another wall of hollow clay tile, are located within the now roofless addition.

Beginning in 1939-1940, the hotel was extensively modified for use as a meat packing plant. The first and second floors were gutted and rebuilt, and some third floor rooms in the main block were remodeled as well. In the rear wing, above the former dining hall, second and third

floor walls, floors, and ceilings were removed to create a single large room two stories high. The third floor trusses, however, remain in place. The kitchen wing was removed, leaving the foundation which was incorporated into a large kill room that, along with an elevator shaft, fully occupies the re-entrant angle formed by the main block and east wing. On the south end of the kill room is a two-story, shed-roofed structure covered with corrugated metal. Wrapped around this feature, in an L-plan, is a concrete yard, originally sheltered with a roof on wooden posts, where livestock were kept prior to slaughter. Along the east side of this yard are long, low gable-roofed frame sheds, with horizontal tongue-and-groove siding, that contained livestock pens. East of the kill room, and connected to the latter by a short hyphen, is a concrete block structure that appears to post-date the meat packing operations. On the main (west) facade of the hotel is a three-bay enclosed loading dock, of yellow and pink brick, concrete, and glazed tile.

In addition to these changes, the original cornice, cupola, and chimneys have been removed, and all original entrances bricked up. The front porch was removed, and a number of windows were either filled in, reshaped and fitted with glass block, or simply boarded up. Nearly all hardware, all lighting and other fixtures, staircases, interior shutters, and other furnishings have been removed. The original room arrangement is evident only on the third floor, and there only in the main block. In the east wing the room partitions, plus the ceiling of the second floor, were removed, creating a single large room two stories

high. The first floor and basement were completely renovated as cold storage facilities.

In general, the hotel has experienced significant loss of architectural integrity.

8. Historical Context

The Euro-American history of Prairie du Chien is traceable to at least 1685, when French-Canadian fur trader Nicholas Perrot built a post on St. Feriole Island from which to trade with the Mesquakie Indians. Perrot's post was not long occupied, however, and a permanent post was not built until 1781. That post, established by traders Augustine Ange, Pierre Antaya, Basil Giard, Michael Brisbois, and Pierre la Pointe, became the nucleus of a small island village inhabited chiefly by the French-Canadians and their Native American wives.¹

During the War of 1812, Prairie du Chien became a focal point in the struggle between British and American forces for control of the upper Mississippi-Great Lakes region, its fur trade, and the allegiance of its native inhabitants. In June 1814, American troops erected a log fort, named Ft. Shelby, near the village. Ft. Shelby was captured by the British with assistance from numerous fur traders the following month and renamed Ft. McKay after a leader of the expedition. With the ultimate American victory in the war, Ft. McKay was abandoned and subsequently burned.²

The United States established a firm military presence, however, with construction of Ft. Crawford on St. Feriole Island in 1816. During the following years, the inhabitants of Prairie du Chien, still largely

French-Canadian, were confirmed in their land titles, and the American Fur Company established a major fur trade post near Ft. Crawford, with Hercules Dousman as agent beginning in 1826.³

By the early 1840s, however, the locus of the fur trade had moved to the upper Missouri and Rocky Mountain regions, and the need for a military presence at Prairie du Chien began to decline as the upper Mississippi region around Prairie du Chien became settled. The village entered a period of economic stagnation which lasted until 1857.⁴ That year, Wisconsin's first railroad, the Milwaukee & Mississippi, completed its line to Prairie du Chien. The terminus, including a depot and yards, was in Prairie du Chien's "Lowertown," a portion of the village located on the mainland below St. Feriole Island, that had been laid out by Alexander McGregor in 1836.⁵

The coming of the railroad produced Prairie du Chien's greatest sustained economic boom, which lasted until about 1885.⁶ It began somewhat shakily, as the Milwaukee & Mississippi in 1859 defaulted on payment of interest on bonds and went bankrupt. In 1861, however, a new company, the Milwaukee and Prairie du Chien, was organized to take over the Milwaukee & Mississippi's operations, and the activity at Prairie du Chien resumed.⁷ The town became a major center for transshipment. Emigrants arrived here by train, then took ferries and steam packet lines north or south to settle in Iowa and Minnesota. Gradually, as lands west of the Mississippi were brought under cultivation, steamboats and barges brought agricultural products to Prairie du Chien for shipment via rail to the East.⁸

The principal beneficiaries of this activity were the inhabitants, businessmen, and landowners of Prairie du Chien's Lowertown, to the growing consternation of those who lived and held property on St. Feriole Island and the "upper town," located on the mainland opposite the island. In an attempt to move the center of economic activity north, inhabitants of St. Feriole and the upper town offered money subscriptions to the Milwaukee and Prairie du Chien Railway Company, to persuade the line to build a new depot on the island.⁹ Coincidentally, there occurred in 1863 and early 1864 a period of very low water in the Mississippi - so low, in fact, that many of the larger steamboats were unable to reach the warehouse docks in Lowertown.¹⁰

By the late summer of 1863, the Milwaukee and Prairie du Chien had begun a major relocation of its facilities from Lowertown to St. Feriole Island. The program included first the construction of a new shipyard, where steamboats and barges operating in connection with the railroad could be built or repaired.¹¹ By spring of 1864, a "mammoth" freight depot and a grain elevator, "largest on the Mississippi," were in operation on St. Feriole Island as well.¹² Following the railroad's lead, a number of local entrepreneurs arranged to move not only their businesses but their buildings to St. Feriole Island and the upper town.¹³

To complete the relocation project, the Milwaukee and Prairie du Chien re-routed its rail line to the newly developed upper levee. To accommodate passengers, the railroad built a small complex of buildings in the block of Water Street below Fisher Street, directly opposite the ferry and packet landings. This complex included a small "emigrant

depot," with attendant "baggage house" and express office, and a much larger "general passenger depot," all connected by a wooden platform extended along the railroad tracks.¹⁴

The "general passenger depot" was much more than the designation suggested. It was, rather, an establishment that included not only a waiting room and ticket office, but also a news depot, a fully-equipped "eating house," over 50 hotel rooms, a women's parlor, and a card room and saloon for male patrons.¹⁵ Construction of this all-purpose facility was well underway by the spring of 1864.¹⁶ It was completed in the spring of 1865, and was formally inaugurated on May 4 with a "grand opening ball."¹⁷ Although the grouping of so many different functions in a single building appears to have been somewhat unusual, the concept of a hotel catering primarily, though by no means exclusively, to railroad travelers, was not. More than a few nineteenth century railroads and local entrepreneurs took advantage of the inevitable demand for eating and sleeping accommodations that developed, as railroads expanded across the country, particularly in communities that served as transshipment points and embarkation centers.¹⁸

The Milwaukee & Prairie du Chien Railroad's new hotel/depot appears to have begun operations without a formal name, as none was given in newspaper accounts even at the opening. Subsequently, however, the establishment was named the Dousman Hotel, by which it was known ever after. The name may have been bestowed around 1868, in honor of Hercules L. Dousman who died that year.¹⁹

Although the steamer trade began to decline in the 1880s due to improved rail service to St. Paul, Minnesota and the West, the Dousman

Hotel remained a popular and successful operation for many years.²⁰ During the 1880s and 1890s, the Dousman Hotel maintained its status as a well-known stopping place for tourists and honeymooners, chiefly due to the efforts of its then proprietor, Charles Hufschmidt. Hufschmidt, originally from Lansing, Iowa, began his career as an hotelier after suffering financial reverses as a wheat broker and shipper. In addition to the Dousman, Hufschmidt also operated the Hufschmidt House at McGregor, Iowa.²¹ One of Dousman's strongest features was its "table," at which duck was the specialty offered to favored guests of the management.²²

With Hufschmidt's death, around 1900, the popularity of the Dousman gradually declined, and most of its patrons were drawn from traveling salesmen and "train gangs" and other railroad employees.²³ The Chicago, Milwaukee, St. Paul & Pacific Railroad, which had acquired the Milwaukee and Prairie du Chien and its assets in 1874, went into receivership in the 1920s. The hotel and several nearby structures were sold in 1926, although the land remained in railroad ownership.²⁴ By that time, the hotel was no longer in operation, as a Sanborn map from 1924 shows the first floor vacant and the upper floors used as apartments. During the early 1930s, these became tenements for local inhabitants on relief or otherwise too poor to afford better quarters.²⁵

In 1937 William D. Carroll, a former mayor of Prairie du Chien and state legislator, purchased both the hotel and the lots on which it was located. In January 1939 he incorporated the Carroll Packing Company and began a major conversion of the old hotel into a cold storage and meat packing plant.²⁶ In April of that year, the Armour Company of

Chicago agreed to lease the facility and operate it for five years.

Under the terms of the agreement, the Carroll Packing Company completed the remodeling effort, which included construction of a large kill room, freight elevator, rendering plant, and tank house, plus conversion of the first floor to a cold storage facility.²⁷

After five years of operation, Armour decided not to renew its lease, and in 1946 the plant was sold to Oscar Mayer & Company. However, by 1952 Oscar Mayer was unable to obtain sufficient livestock to keep the operation profitable, and was forced to lay off over 100 employees.²⁸ In 1956, Oscar Mayer sold the property to the Wisconsin Farmco Service Cooperative. Under this and subsequent owners, the former hotel was used principally for storage.

FDOTNDTES

1 Constance M. Evans, Prairie du Chien and the Winneshiek (8y the Author, 1928), p. 2.

2 Violet D. Young, Illustrated Handbook of the Historic Home of Hercules Dousman (8y the Author, 1936), p. 3.

3 Ibid., pp. 3, 7.

4 Richard H. Zeitlin, Prairie du Chien: Urban Consolidation and Decline 1858-1930 (St. Paul: U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, St. Paul District, [1981]), p. 5.

5 Evans, Prairie du Chien and the Winneshiek, p. 4; and Peter L. Scanlon, Prairie du Chien: French, British, American (Menasha, WI: Geo. Banta Publishing Company, 1937), p. 209.

6 Zeitlin, Prairie du Chien: Urban Consolidation, p. 5.

7 History of Crawford and Richland Counties, Wisconsin (Springfield, IL: Union Publishing Company, [1884]), p. 404; William F. Raney, Wisconsin: A Story of Progress (New York: Prentice-Hall, 1940), p. 185; and Frederick Merk, Economic History of Wisconsin During the Civil War Decade (Madison, WI: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1916), pp. 290-291.

8 Zeitlin, Prairie du Chien: Urban Consolidation, p. 6.

9 Scanlon, Prairie du Chien: French, British, American, p. 209.

10 John G. Gregory, ed., Southwestern Wisconsin: A History of Old Crawford County (Chicago: S.J. Clarke, 1932), p. 224; and Prairie du Chien Courier, 6 August 1863.

11 Prairie du Chien Courier, 6 August 1863.

12 Prairie du Chien Courier, 12 May 1864.

13 Prairie du Chien Courier, 9 June 1864.

14 "Plan of Depot Buildings at Prairie du Chien," drawing (c.1870) on file at State Historical Society of Wisconsin.

15 Prairie du Chien Courier, 23 June 1864.

16 Prairie du Chien Courier, 26 May 1864.

17 Prairie du Chien Courier, 4 May 1865.

18 Some hotels were built by railroads; in Wisconsin, examples included the Milwaukee Railway Hotel, erected in Madison in 1856, and the Monona Hotel, a Madison establishment associated with the North Western Line. (The Capital Times (Madison), 27 March 1953, newspaper clipping file, University of Wisconsin Library, Platteville.) Many others were built by local investors, such as the Ogden House, in Council Bluffs, Iowa in 1868; and the Burtis-Kimball Hotel, Davenport, Iowa in 1872-74. (Lucy Beall Graeme, National Register of Historic Places nomination form for the Ogden Hotel [1976]; M.H. Sowers, National Register of Historic Places nomination form for the Burtis-Kimball Hotel, January 1979.) Ideally, these railroad hotels were located as close to a depot or rail platform as possible. Failing this, other arrangements could be made, as was the case with the Mondell House at Prairie du Chien, which operated a free coach service to and from the levee. (Prairie du Chien Courier, 10 September 1952, reprinted from 5 June 1877 issue.)

Although the great age of the passenger train and the railroad hotel is long past, its legacy remains in hotels and motels catering to air travelers. It is perhaps best exemplified by the O'Hare Hilton, Chicago, which maintains special arrangements with the airlines to handle stranded passengers, and which is accessible from the terminal through specially constructed tunnels.

19 Dousman, born in 1800 on Mackinac Island, was a long-time resident of Prairie du Chien, having come to the community in 1826 as an agent for the American Fur Company. A consummate frontier entrepreneur, Dousman gradually expanded the scope of his investments beyond the fur trade into Mississippi River steamship and packet lines, real estate, and ultimately, railroads. As a major shareholder in the Milwaukee and Mississippi, Dousman was instrumental in bringing that line, the first of Wisconsin's numerous railroads, into Prairie du Chien. At the time of his death, Dousman had served four years on the Milwaukee & Prairie du Chien's "Board of Supervisors." (Violet O. Young. Illustrated Handbook, pp. 6-10; Prairie du Chien Courier, 16 June 1864.)

20 Gregory, Southwestern Wisconsin, p. 227; and Zeitlin, Prairie du Chien: Urban Consolidation, p. 13.

21 Fred A. Schrader, "A History of the Dousman Hotel," State Historical Society of Wisconsin, [1957]. (Typewritten.); Prairie du Chien Courier, 10 September 1952; and Dubuque Telegraph-Herald, 3 September 1952.

22 Prairie du Chien Courier, 10 September 1952; Fred A. Schrader, "A History of Dousman Hotel;" and Interview with Mrs. Rudy Opat, Prairie du Chien, Wisconsin, 20 March 1957.

23 Dubuque Telegraph-Herald, 3 September 1952; and Interview with Mrs. Ruby Opat, 20 March 1957.

24 Bill of Sale, dated 31 December 1926, recorded 3 May 1937, in Volume L, Miscellaneous, p. 516, Crawford County Recorder, Prairie du Chien, Wisconsin.

25 Dubuque Telegraph-Herald, 3 September 1952.

26 Prairie du Chien Courier, 10 September 1952.

27 Prairie du Chien Courier, 4 April 1939.

28 Dubuque Telegraph-Herald, 3 September 1952.

II. Architectural Information

A. General Statement

1. Architectural Character: The Dousman Hotel was a large building in the Italianate style serving the combined functions of railway depot, restaurant and hotel. It was prominently situated along the Chicago, Milwaukee, St. Paul & Pacific Railroad tracks, across from the principal steamboat landing on Prairie du Chien's St. Feriote Island.

2. Condition of Fabric: The hotel appears structurally sound, although deteriorated through lack of maintenance over many decades. Portions of the first floor have collapsed, and other floors must be treated with caution. The building has been extensively altered (see Section I.A.6).

B. Description of Exterior

1. Overall Dimensions: The hotel, three stories on a full basement, was built with an L-shaped plan, consisting of a nine-bay main block fronting Water Street and the river, and a ten-bay rear wing fronting on Fisher Street. At the east end of the wing, on the south side, was a two-story kitchen wing. At the south end of the main block, on the east side, was a small two-and-a-half story pavilion, with a one-story section attached to the east wall.

2. Foundations: The foundation is of local limestone. The exterior is faced with large ashlar blocks with pecked finish for five courses, with coursed quarry faced stone below. Quoins are set off as large blocks with quarry faces and chiseled margins. The water table

consists of a narrow band of limestone slabs slightly projecting beyond the main wall plane.

3. Walls: The walls are laid up in a yellow brick, called "Milwaukee" brick, probably because it was made in that city, with stretcher bond on the exterior.²⁹ The main block features a five-bay central entrance frontispiece that is very slightly advanced beyond the main wall plane, and is surmounted by a shallow gable. All corners of the building are quoined with slightly corbeled courses of yellow brick.

4. Structural System, Framing: The exterior walls are load-bearing; interior walls are framed with studs to which nailed lath and plaster was then applied. The first floor appears to have been supported by square, probably brick, piers in the basement. The second floor was probably supported by transverse floor beams inserted into pockets in the outer walls. The third floor is carried on a system of modified queen-post trusses, reinforced with vertical iron tie rods, which are enclosed within room partitions. These trusses are hung from very large king-post trusses in the attic, which also support the single-rafter system of the shallow hipped roof. The king-post trusses are fashioned from 12 x 12's with mortise-and-tenon joints and vertical iron tie rods. The vertical rods of each queen-post truss extend through the bottom chord of the respective king-post truss, and are bolted in place. The diagonal member of each queen-post truss is in turn held in place beneath the bottom chord of the king-post truss with diagonal rods bolted at each end. The ends of the king-post trusses are inserted into pockets near the top of the exterior walls. In the angle formed by the main block and rear wing, there is but a single king-post

truss, which is situated on a diagonal running northeast-southwest. Rafters and attic floor joists appear to be butted into the walls, as there is no plate. The rafters are nailed in place, and at the top are simply butted and nailed against a plank serving as the ridge pole.

5. Porches: Originally there was a one-story wooden porch extending the full width of the frontispiece. The extremely shallow hipped roof had a broad, molded cornice with widely-spaced ornamental brackets. Like the frontispiece, it was divided into five bays, with the end bays marking the entrances. These end bays were distinguished by tall round arches flanked by narrow five-light sidelights. The porch posts, on low pedestals, had a slight batter and recessed panels on each face. Stair and porch railings lacked spindles, and instead displayed long, lozenge-shaped "cut-outs." Square posts at the bottom of each stair railing featured bulbous finials. The entire porch appears to have been gaily painted, and at times was furnished with striped awnings hung across the three central bays.

On the north side of the building, at the second bay from the west end, was a short flight of wooden steps to a door leading into a parlor.

6. Chimneys: The hotel was furnished with numerous, rather short chimneys set near the roof edges. They appear to have been of the same yellow brick as the walls, and featured recessed panels and corbeled caps. At the front, there were two, symmetrically placed toward each end of the entrance frontispiece. There were two more on the south end of the main block. There were six chimneys on the north (Fisher Street) side, four on the south side, and five across the rear (east) of the main block. Because the flues were located in the

exterior walls, the placement of the chimneys corresponded to spaces between the window bays, and thus accounted for the irregular pattern of fenestration on the north wall and the rear elevations.

7. Openings

a. Doorways and Doors: There were at least two principal entrances, located in the end bays of the frontispiece. They were set within tall, round-arched openings, of which there were five across the front. All have been filled in, and are obscured by the porch in historical photographs. On the north side, near the west end, was a round-arched entrance of narrow proportions corresponding to the width of surrounding window bays. Below this entrance was an entrance to the basement, with a large slab lintel.

b. Windows: Windows were fitted with six-over-six double hung sash set in molded wooden frames toward the outer plane of the wall. The openings are round-arched, with narrow limestone sills. The arches are articulated with corbeled voussoirs. Arches of the first and second floor windows are further ornamented by an outer ring of header brick. At the central bay on the main facade, the second and third floor windows are paired and slightly taller than those to either side. The arches are treated like those of the first and second floors, but in addition have slightly projecting keystones and are supported on brick pilasters with corbeled caps and bases. Basement windows had six-light sash below shallow segmental limestone arches with flush keystones. The kitchen wing featured rectangular window openings surmounted by slab lintels of limestone.

8. Roof

a. Shape, Covering: The building has a very shallow hipped roof which originally had fairly wide eaves. It is covered with several layers of asbestos shingles and roll sheathing.

b. Cornice, Eaves: The building originally displayed a wide wooden cornice. The cornice had a horizontal plank frieze and an architrave molding that was fitted closely around the arches of the third floor windows. The cornice of the front gable had long, though partial, returns. Ornamental wooden brackets were placed at intervals along the cornice on all elevations.

c. Cupola: Originally there was a tall wooden cupola or belvedere centered on the roof above the frontispiece. It was rectangular, with a low hipped roof and small triangular pediments on each side. Each wall of the cupola featured a triptych of round-arched windows. The center window in each triptych was slightly taller than the others, and was ornamented at the top with an applied crest. The cupola is no longer extant, having been replaced with a small gable-roofed structure that is accessible from an original, interior staircase to the cupola.

C. Description of Interior

1. Floor plans

a. Basement: The only available information is that included in a manuscript by Fred Schrader, a former Chicago, Milwaukee, St. Paul & Pacific employee. Schrader believed there to have been a saloon located in the northwest corner of the building. He also

mentioned a "special room" in the basement in which the hotel roasted its own coffee, but provided no specific location.³⁰

b. First Floor: The first floor of the main block originally served as a railway passenger depot. It was divided into three general areas, the largest, at the center, being a waiting room and ticket office. At the south end was a men's card room and saloon, while a women's parlor was located on the north end. The main staircase was located against the parlor wall, accessible from the waiting room. Approximately two-thirds of the first floor of the wing fronting on Fisher Street was occupied by a large dining room. The easternmost third was partitioned into four small rooms, plus a staircase, according to the "Plan of Depot Buildings..." of c. 1870. A Sanborn fire insurance map of 1905 locates the kitchen in this area, but shows only a single wall setting off the kitchen from the dining room. A Sanborn map of 1912, however, indicates that the kitchen was located in the two-story pavilion off the south side of the wing. It is likely that several rooms were devoted to food preparation and service, as Mrs. Rudy Opat who worked at the hotel from 1893-1899, recalls both a "dish room" and a "pastry room" being associated with the kitchen activities.³¹

c. Second and Third Floors: These floors were used for hotel accommodations, and contained over fifty rooms. The rooms, of varying sizes, were located to each side of central hallways which opened into a large square space at the re-entrant angle between the main block and wing.

2. Stairways: As noted above, the main stair was located toward the north end of the main block. The only staircase that is

confirmed as original is that leading from the attic to the cupola. It features a simple spindle balustrade, molded railing, and turned newel post.

3. Flooring: The flooring appears to have been tongue-and-groove planking approximately four inches wide. Hallways were carpeted, according to Opat.32

4. Wall and Ceiling Finish: Interior walls were plaster on sawed lath. Baseboards in the halls had heavy moldings, but those in the hotel rooms appear to have been flat. The room at the southwest corner of the third floor has an ornate pressed-metal ceiling with narrow, ornamental coves. Other rooms have plain plastered ceilings, and the extent to which they may have been covered with pressed metal is not known.

5. Openings

a. Doorways and Doors: Doorways on the third floor have wide, strongly molded architraves and three-light transoms. Doors have four vertical recessed panels, the lower pair half the height of the upper pair. Panels of some doors are edged with bolection moldings, while others are plain. The doors are hung from plain brass butt hinges. At least one, which may have been moved to its present location in a hall leading to the kill room, retains a simple brass thumb-latch.

b. Windows: Window architraves are rectangular, with strongly-articulated moldings and deep, molded sills. The spandrels between the architrave and the round arch of the window frame are inset with plain, triangular panels. Small brass pins located on the inner edges of the architraves suggest that the windows originally had wooden

shutters that could be drawn across the lower sash. Natural light reached the hallways of the upper floors from windows at each end, and through the transom lights over the room doors.

6. Decorative Features and Trim: No additional information.

7. Hardware: Almost entirely removed, except for simple brass catches on window sash, and shutter hinges.

8. Mechanical Equipment

a. Heating, Air Conditioning, Ventilation: Hotel rooms were heated by coal stoves as indicated by flue openings for stovepipes in several rooms. Ventilation was obtained from opening windows and also by circulation across door transoms.

b. Lighting: No original fixtures extant.

c. Plumbing: Fred Schrader provided the following description of sanitation facilities in a typescript dated 1957: There was a "battery of old-fashioned toilets which lined the hallway on each floor. Each deck of toilets were off-set like a stairway and the waste from each section dropped down an open shaft into a huge funnel-shaped pit in the basement. The rain water from the main roof was directed into this funnel-shaped pit, to wash away the sewage into the river. These toilets necessitated the hiring of chamber-maids who took care of all chambers from each room."33

9. Furnishings: No information available.

D. Site

1. General Setting: The hotel faces west, across two lines of railroad track and Water Street, toward the Mississippi River. The river bank, formerly a steamboat and ferry landing, is now landscaped as a public park. To the south is the former "emigrant" depot, a one-story structure with side-gable roof and large pendant brackets supporting very wide eaves. To the southeast is a long, low stone wall which is the remains of a large freight warehouse which originally served both steamboats and the railroad. North of the hotel, across Fisher Street, is the Elizabeth Rolette House, a two-story, side-gable frame dwelling built in 1842. The Rolette House appears to have been moved to this location, as the limestone foundation is larger than the house. Indeed, according to the 1912 Sanborn map, the Tremont House Hotel was once located here. This establishment, first opened in 1826-27 and subsequently enlarged by H. Baldwin, was probably by virtue of its location, the Dousman Hotel's chief competitor.³⁴ Photographs dated c. 1906 show a sizeable, two-story building with round-arched windows at this location. (See HABS photographs WI-291-29 and WI-291-30.) North of the Rolette House are the Brisbois House (1837) and the former American Fur Company warehouse (1829), both of limestone construction. Beyond these lies the Dousman family complex, dominated by a large Italianate dwelling built c. 1870 for the widow of Hercules Dousman. Inland from North Second Street, most buildings once located here have been torn down or relocated, as the area is now a flood-control zone. A handful of nineteenth century frame buildings, plus a two-story log house, remain.

2. Landscape Design: None.

3. Outbuildings: None extant. Schrader reported that a "large horse barn" was located "adjoining the street on the east side of the big yard," which places it either on Water Street, east of the rail yard, or perhaps east of the hotel on Fisher or Second Streets.³⁵

FOOTNOTES

29 Milwaukee Daily Sentinel, 10 October 1864, reprinted in Prairie du Chien Courier, 24 October 1864.

30 Schrader, "A History of Dousman Hotel." There is no information available regarding dates of Schrader's employment by the railroad.

31 Interview with Mrs. Ruby Opat, 20 March 1957.

32 Ibid.

33 Schrader, "A History of Dousman Hotel."

34 History of Crawford and Richland Counties, Wisconsin (Springfield, IL: Union Publishing Company, [1884]), p. 666.

35 Ibid.

III. Sources of Information

A. Architectural Drawings: "Plan of Depot Buildings at Prairie du Chien," ink and colored wash on paper, c. 1870, State Historical Society of Wisconsin.

B. Historical photographs, from collections of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin:

- DOUSMAN HOUSE SEEN FROM THE MISSISSIPPI RIVER
(Neg. # WHI(x3)40382) About 1900-05.
- DOUSMAN HOUSE
(Neg. # WHI(x3)40381) About 1906.
- DOUSMAN HOTEL, BACKGROUND
(Neg. # WHI(C76)2I5) About 1916.
- DOUSMAN HOTEL DURING HIGH WATER IN THE SPRING
(Neg. # WHI(C76)2ID) 1916.
- DOUSMAN HOTEL, BUILT ABOUT 1862
(Neg. # WHI(x3)I8585) About 1925.
- DOUSMAN HOTEL
(Neg. # WHI(x3I3)273B) About 1930.
- RAILROAD PLAN. ORIGINAL FILED AS 7-146
(Neg. # WHI(x3)40388) About 1870.

Copies of these historic photographs have been included with the submission of this report to the Historic American Buildings Survey.

C. Bibliography

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D. Likely Sources Not Yet Investigated

-Milwaukee and Prairie du Chien Railway Company, Annual Reports 1861-66. These are listed in the card catalogue of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin Library, but could not be located even with the assistance of a librarian.

IV. Project Information

The Dousman Hotel was recorded for the National Park Service, Rocky Mountain Region, in November and December of 1983, by Dennett, Muessig, Ryan & Associates, Ltd. The field measuring crew was headed by Hans Muessig, and included Marie A. Neubauer and Angela Schiller. J Ceronie and Robert A. Ryan were the project photographers, and Martha H. Bowers served as the historian/architectural historian. Editing and report preparation were provided by Phyllis A. Stiefel. Bruce A. Harms assisted with photographic laboratory services. The drawing set was produced from field measurements, and was delineated by Marie A. Neubauer.